

“Of Saving Faith” part 9, WCF 14.2.9b, Saving Faith Is in Christ ALONE

2021.05.02 Sabbath School Lesson

Hopewell ARPC, Culleoka, TN

for audio of this lesson, click bit.ly/210502wcf (or scan QR code on the right)



WCF 14.2 (TPH p927)

*II. By this faith, a Christian believeth to be true whatsoever is revealed in the Word, for the authority of God Himself speaking therein;(e) and acteth differently upon that which each particular passage thereof containeth; yielding obedience to the commands,(f) trembling at the threatenings,(g) and embracing the promises of God for this life, and that which is to come.(h) But the principal acts of saving faith are accepting, receiving, and **resting upon Christ alone for justification, sanctification, and eternal life, by virtue of the covenant of grace.(i)***

(e) John 4:42; I Thess. 2:13; I John 5:10; Acts 24:14.

(f) Rom. 16:26.

(g) Isa. 66:2.

(h) Heb. 11:13; I Tim. 4:8.

*(i) John 1:12; Acts 16:31; **Gal. 2:20; Acts 15:11.***

Galatians 2:15 **We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles,** ¹⁶ knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.

¹⁷ “But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not! ¹⁸ For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. ¹⁹ For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. ²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. ²¹ I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain.”

What had Peter and Paul and the Antiochan Christians already received (v16)?

What problem did they still have (v17)? What do we call the process of dealing with this problem?

What point do vv18–21 make about how this problem is dealt with—from where does the life for it come?

What does v18 say I am doing to myself, if I make my own works the ground or power of my sanctification—what reverse implication would this have for my justification?

Acts 15:6 **Now the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter.** ⁷ And when there had been much dispute, Peter rose up and said to them: “Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. ⁸ So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, ⁹ and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. ¹⁰ Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? ¹¹ But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they.”

What has happened by Peter’s mouth (v7)?

What has God done to the Gentiles’ hearts (v9)?

What is yet to be completed in the future (v11, cf. Rom 13:11)?

What does v10 call it if, instead of by faith and grace, they try to do this through law-keeping (and especially the ceremonial law)?

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. Please be aware of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording referenced above)

Well, you're trying to finish up this morning by God's help the principal acts of saving faith. Last week we considered that the principal act of saving faith our seeming accepting receiving and resting upon Christ and this week we're going to really see that word alone come to light and then also the fact that it's not just for justification, but that saving faith looks to Christ alone arrests upon Christ to look Christ alone also for sanctification and eternal life.

Since we seek to do this by God's help with us for that help.

The Lord how often we? Come to you in a moment of such immediate urgency that we cry out with Peter. As he was sinking into the water. Lord help. And yet there is a sense in which our father that. This is the main theme of all of our prayers.

That our help is in your name, oh yah by here have made the heavens and the earth. That you are the only one who can help and that you by your mercy have pledged yourself given yourself to be that help. We thank you that you have done this supremely so in your son our Lord Jesus Christ.

And that you now Lord Jesus and our Father give your spirit. Who applies your salvation to us. As we pray for his help now as we study your work. In Jesus name amen.

To chapter 11. The apostle Paul starts describing a scene that looks not unlike this one well with the exception of that there isn't a set of Jewish tables over here and a set of gentile tables over there or whichever direction it would be he's not in Peter had come to Antioch I was stood into his face because he used to be blamed for before a certain men came from James he would eat with the gentiles so you would supposing they had probably not but supposing they did like a, Food table children before the men from James came the Jewish circumcision party men came Peter would get to the end of end of the table you have his who you have his tray or his food, hey look around there'll be a bunch of gentiles sitting together he goes sit down with him, but then one large day the circumcision party arrive, here's some Jewish ethnic believers who whom Peter recognizes from back in Jerusalem where James brother of Jesus is now kind of the, The lead elder of that church.

But one day came verse 12, he withdrew and separated himself fearing those who are of the circumcision so when he comes that Lord say to the end of the table, he looks at who's eating he sees that there's the circumcision party over there and his group of gentile friends that he's been eating with every lord's day, they're looking up they're getting ready for Peter to cut, you know, waving him over making room on the table for him and he takes an early right turn and goes up the island sits down with the circumcision.

Party and you would not think that this was a big theological problem, but it does turn out to be a big theological problem not just because he hurt the feelings. The Gentiles or even not just because he didn't love them as well as he should love them but because there was something about maintaining the distinction from the ceremonial law that that made Paul think this isn't just a lunchroom and treat other believers well issue there's a gospel issue here or to put it in the language of what we're studying in these in these weeks as we look at the background of this chapter in the confession, there's a, Saving faith issue that saving faith is rest upon Christ alone for justification sanctification and eternal life.

So he says in the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him so that even Barnabas was carried away their hypocrisy but when I saw that they were not look what he says this is what he's concerned about when he sees this happening he's looking at the doctrine behind it when I saw that they were not straight forward about the truth of the gospel.

I said to Peter before them all if you being a Jew live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews in other words ever since that she came down from heaven you have enjoyed all the bacon and lobster you could get your hands on Peter and you are not trying to keep yourself ceremonly clean all the time and you're then happy enough to sit at the gentile table or the fellowship meal and go over to the gentile houses and the middle of the week.

Okay, if you being a Jew live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as juice, oh suddenly it's important to you that they don't happen to be circumcised in the flesh. We who are Jews oh okay so we've got the next seven verses on the sheet so if we could have just no when I was growing up in secret friendly church, we called it popcorn style.

I don't think it has anything to do with secret friendly, but just because you never know when the next pop is going or from where the next pop is going to come so just someone start verse 15 and then someone else start verse 16 and hopefully sometimes agonizingly we will get all the way through verse 21.

Help if I picked a starter Russell's read verse 15 for us, please.

Kind even we have believed if Christ Jesus that we may might be justified by faith in Christ and not by words the law to by works of the law, no threat. But if while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also our sentence is correct therefore a minister of sin certain not provided filled but I toured down I proved myself to be a transgressor.

Why through the law died to the law that I might live to God.

I think crucified with false there was no longer I who lived but Christ who lives in me and the life which I now live in the flesh are lived by faith in the son of God who loved me and gave himself court.

And that's what a side of the grace of God for fractals comes to the love and Christ died and. Thank you very much if you have not memorized verse 20 yet. I would recommend that it be high on your list of scripture to have at instant recall for yourself throughout your life.

Alright so in verse 16, he says knowing that a man is not justified by works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ even we have believed in Christ Jesus that we might be justified by our faith. In Christ and not by works on the law works of the law for by the works of a law and no flesh shall be justified okay, so thinking back to our paragraph above that the principal acts of saving faith are accepting receiving and resting upon Christ alone for justification sanctification and eternal life and here as Paul is standing up to Peter and make any great big scene in the lunch in the lunchroom he's saying we already all agree that it is only.

By faith and not at all by works of the law that we are what verse 16, so three times. What what has come to them only by faith not by works of law, in fact you have to renounce the idea you have to abandon the idea that you can be made right with God by what you do in order to say the only way for me to be made right with God is by what Jesus has done right so these two things are set at opposite one another as soon as you say Jesus and you are not hoping in Christ alone for your justification.

And yet suddenly the lunchroom's been split into and the the the men from Jerusalem have come and these calling them the circumcision and they are identifying themselves as a circumcision and that Peter's quit sitting with the Gentiles and all the even Barnabas. Monomers remember was the one who had run to get Paul to bring him to Antioch because they had this wonderfully multiplying church that was a mile wide and an inch deep and they really needed a great teacher and bottomless said I know exactly where to get one.

So but this same bottom of this who is in on the beginning of this explosion of the Gospel in this Gentile church, he has been taken away with it too. And so the first part of Paul's argument with Peter is we all agree. That justification being made right with God.

When that means going from God responding to you in his wrath because of your guilt when you're made right with God when you're justified he responds to you only in favor. There is therefore now no condemnation for the one who is in Christ Jesus. But justification isn't all that God does in saving us is it?

So there's a problem that even justified believers continue to have in this life. And you see Paul refer to that. Problem in the next verse but if while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners. Is Christ therefore a minister of sin. Certainly not.

So, what's the problem? How are already justified Christians? Still found. We are still found what? Sinners do you not realize this? Well, you want to realize this very quickly and repeatedly about ourselves and God the Holy Spirit helping us we do and if you find that he's doing that work of grace and you thank God for giving you that tender conscience but we also very quickly and easily realize it about others don't we like David who Nathan knows that if he wants to convict him about this any tells on the story about the rich man and the poor man and, And the lamb that was like a that was like a daughter because it's much easier for us to say that men shall surely die about someone else.

Well, you got a whole table of Jews over here who are explaining the remaining sin in the Gentiles over there by the fact that they had been circumcised in the flesh. So he says we've been justified through faith alone, but the reason we're so much more sanctified than those guys over there that we say are also justified by faith alone is we got this little difference in our flesh we've been cut where they have it.

That's what they're saying. And you can hear that in the way. Paul is responding to his argument. He's saying we are found sinners not just they. We are found sinners and the same hope that we had for being made right with God. Is the hope that we have for being made right just like God.

We all agree that we've received imputed righteousness by resting upon Christ alone. But as you grow in holiness the only way you receive imparted righteousness God making you to be like the Jesus who has been your obedience your righteousness before Him the only way you grow in Christ's likeness is from Christ's life.

As he says, you are so much better than the guys over there, and if you wonder the difference wouldn't be that you're cut. Okay. So if while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves are also fencing as Christ therefore ministers in certainly not for if I build again those things which I destroyed I make myself a transgressor for I through the law died to the law that I might live to God.

You hear what he's saying here? Saying if you want to live unto God the only hood for that is resting on Christ alone. So if you start to bring back in this resting upon what you do? I mean, we do lots of things, don't we? We're keeping the Lord's Day.

We're gathered for public worship. We are instead of having you know, super fun activity time for for all you kids because when the kids think it's fun parents like to go and not have to deal with their kids for a couple hours and you really pump up the numbers.

For a lot of churches at your parents children could be taking YouTube and instead of hearing the Bible explained to you you would be having super fun activity time and you know. Five minutes of instruction or something look up Lutheran satire and the start of children's church and. For the three-year-old who sings sometimes make a macaroni cross and then we all will be redeemed.

Okay. The reason we're not doing that is because God has given this a guy who he has set apart for it teaching you from his word as the way that he forms you to look like Jesus. But there is a problem that can come up God had given circumcision to he got rid of circumcision.

Now if we started to rest upon what we were doing now. If you thought. I am going to become more like Jesus. Or. I am trusting in the fact that mom and dad bring me to hear the elders teach or Pastor James teach to make me more like Jesus then you've already started to make the same mistake.

What you need to do when you come and what we need to do for our children when we come is to say I am trusting Jesus. That he will make me more like himself and that's why we do what we do at church. It's because it's what Jesus says to do now.

Jesus no longer says to be circumcised. That's why Christians don't have to do it. He does say that we should that we should seek to be sanctified by his word, but we need to be trusting him to do it, so I threw the law died to the law. I died to the idea that I could obey well enough to become better.

In order that I might live to God and then he gives this verse that I recommended that if you don't have it memorized you should memorize it. I have been crucified with Christ it is no longer. I who live but Christ who lives in me the life which I now live in the flesh.

I live by faith. In the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me so it's Jesus isn't just your only hope for justification that you have a right standing with God. Jesus is your only hope for sanctification the life that you live in the flesh, you live by faith in him he gave himself for you so that he would be all of your hope for growing in grace, yes brother Jeff.

Of Christ.

The article is there, which is article is often there so that faith and then if it's if it's in a in the genitive. Well. It depends on the preposition. I don't know if the preposition is inner ACE. I think ACES looking it up right now. One would be in and it would and one would be into about.

It's n okay. And then. With the dative or with the genitive depend it depends on the. It depends on the.

Well the grammar the case of the word and which preposition is used and. The presence of the article. So.

Well, I've got it on my phone too. Yeah, no, that's okay. Yeah, it is a legitimate question and I just have to confess to being unprepared to answer it both are actually true. When your faith is in Jesus. Your hope or the power of your Christian growth isn't in the strength of your faith.

Right? So a big part of believing in Jesus is believing that it's his faith that counts for you. This is something that we often refer to and we're talking about coming in public worship. We'll take we'll make the we'll take a little bit more on the bunny trail and then come back Hebrews chapter 2.

If you look at verse 12.

Saying I will declare your name to my brethren. Okay, so this is this is Jesus who was willing to. To perfect us through suffering so that he could bring us to glory and there's a wonderful parallel between chapter 2 in chapter 12 here. But this is this is quotations that are being applied to Jesus and his role now in the worship assembly which is able to come to God through not the sacrifice of bulls and goats outside the Holy of Holies with the ones through all sacrifice of Christ.

And now Jesus having made purification as the opening of chapter one said, Down at the right hand of the Majesty on I says, I will declare your name to my brethren. So Jesus is the preacher in the public worship. In the midst of the assembly, I will sing praise to you.

Jesus is the singer in the public portion, which is one of the marvelous things kids remember whenever we are singing in the public worship you sing those words of Christ and we'll all submit to one another and he'll make his word to dwell on us richly his bills with his spirit, but Jesus is also primarily the believer in public portion.

Verse 13 and again, I will put my trust in him. He is the main believer in public worship and he brings the whole church to glory as his covenant household. Right if you're ahead of the household in the congregation it is your duty to show up for church and say here I am and the children that God has given me my covenant children in the corporate worship service, you have the household of God and Jesus Christ and Christ is the head over the house and he's a good household he brings his household to the public worship and he says here I am.

And the children all of the church whom God has given me so Christ the preacher Christ the senior Christ the believer and Christ and his household gathered for the public worship so Christ is the primary believer in the church we are accustomed to thinking of him like that, but when we remember how weak our faith still is like that daddy who wanted his child delivered and as as crying out I believe helped my unbelief.

When we remember how weak our faith is still is it becomes that much more important to us that Jesus is actually the primary believer in the church that it's his faith that is counted for us it's the strength of his faith upon which the success of our sanctification rests not the strength of our faith, our faith is being strengthened by his and that was what Paul perceived to be the issue of.

Because he he saw the Jewish table now saying the success of the strengthening of our faith that success of our growth in grace depends in part on. What we do it doesn't depend upon what we do we do what we do because it depends upon Christ and if they thought that that was true they would not have rejected these over here who were defending upon Christ.

Okay. I do not set aside the grace of God for a freighthness comes through the law then Christ died in vain okay, let's go immediately to acts. Similar situation the circumcision party. We've been much used by God to help us remember that or learn and remember that all of our salvation rests upon Christ alone they had been troubling all the gentile churches to the to the point where they had to have the first general senator the first general assembly where elders from all the different regions of the church gathered in Jerusalem to to sort out what ought to be done.

I'm, Just gonna go. Ahead and read for the sake of time. Now the apostles and elders came together to consider this matter. And when there had been much dispute Peter raised up Rosa and said to them men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us that bond my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe.

So by his mouth, The nations the Gentiles had heard the word of the gospel and they had believed. So God who knows the heart verse 8 acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us you remember the Holy Spirit fell upon the Gentiles and Peters kind of looking over his shoulder at those who have come that are of the circumcision party there in Cornelius's house and he's saying, Cook and refuse water for them to be baptized upon whom the Lord has poured out this.

Okay. And he made no distinction between us and them purifying their hearts by faith. So their hearts were made alive set apart from the unregenerate hearts of the whole world in order to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and then they have also been growing in that grace ever since they believed.

And so you have probably both people say well this has to be positional sanctification in verse nine because there. Progressive sanctification isn't finished yet. Well, yes, it is positional he set them apart set their hearts apart as holy by faith may give them a new heart a different heart but they have been sanctified to some extent just because it's not done yet doesn't mean that none of it has happened.

And so, I think that the Apostle Peter here is probably appealing to both of those works of God in them. Now, therefore. Why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear. The idea that by keeping the ceremonial law well enough you can improve your holiness.

But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved in the same manner as they and that's the primary proof text and primary reason. And children and adults maybe you often hear Christians talk about I got saved as if it's past tense. And usually, hopefully not usually hopefully when they use it past tense like that they mean.

I came to faith in Jesus Christ, I receive I accepted received and rested upon Christ alone for justification. For my right standing with God. But salvation for the Christian who still on earth is not just past tense. It has passed and present and future God's salvation of you includes much more than just making you right with Him.

It includes making you righteous like in it includes delivering you not only from all of your troubles, but also from your sin. You live in a world that is bound to corruption and decay. You live in a culture that hates the kingship of Christ. And you live in a body that is going to go into the grave and as long as you're in that body you have also that remaining fleshliness that the New Testament talks about that remaining sinfulness as long as you have any of those things you still need to be saved and even there is part of your salvation that those who are in glory are still waiting for.

The redemption of their bodies Romans 8 says that that's what the creation groans to and those who have the first root to the spirit grown toward. So to important proof texts for that and this one in particular reminding us that it's by faith in Christ alone, but we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved.

This is the assembly. Of the apostles who remain and the representative elders from all the churches and all of the regions of the church. So as far as like those who have made progress in grace on earth. This is the top of the top who are gathered, right? They are the most mature they have made the most progress in grace and they're still saying we shall be saved in the same manner as they and then the text that I usually use I'll probably start using that one from now on when I'm showing how the New Testament uses this word salvation Romans 13 verse 11.

And do this knowing that knowing the time that now it is high time to awake out of sleep for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. Well now is the furthest you have ever been from the time that you first believed since you first believed and now we're even further by a few seconds.

But now we are nearer to the day of resurrection in which all that Jesus has earned for you and all that God in Christ has committed to doing both for you and in you will be completed in the day of resurrection. So there's a lot of salvation to go yet as long as you're in this life and at rests entirely.

Upon the Lord Jesus Christ. There is doing there is working in sanctification, but the reason we do what we do is because at rests upon Jesus and he is the one who has said to do it. And so we do it by faith in him. And we don't despise those who aren't as far along and grace.

And we're often surprised when we have those delusions of being further along to find out that there are many ways in which they were further along than we were. But we rest upon Christ for ourselves and so long as they are credibly professing believers who have not brought that profession into question with the judgment of the church as Christ as has given the church to do through the process of church discipline as long as there credibly professing believers members of the church.

We give them a judgment of charity that they are depending upon Christ alone, we talk to them that way. Don't you know that that's what Jesus died for. Don't you know that Jesus is planned for those who are his is to make them to be like himself. Don't you love that you're called a child of God.

Don't you look forward to appearing like him when he appears? Don't you want to purify himself purify yourself as he is pure? It all rests on Jesus. So saving faith. The principle acts of saving faith are accepting receiving and resting upon Christ alone. For justification sanctification and eternal life.

By virtue of the covenant of grace. Let's pray. Our Father how we thank you for the saving faith? That you have given us already and we ask that you would give us more that you would grow us by your grace in this faith. We believe Lord help our unbelief and we ask for those who do not even yet believe that your spirit would give them that faith and then grow them in it for the rest of their lives.

Grant. That we would know ourselves to be those who were crucified with Christ. So that we would as we do the things that Christ has commanded hope in the fact that it is no longer we who live but Christ who lives in us. Rejoicing that the life that we live now we live by faith in Him dependence upon him.

Who loved us and gave Himself for us. We asked these things in. His name. Amen.